Arabic in Madagascar[1]

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1. *Introduction: The coming of Muslim migrants to Madagascar*

> When the prophet Ravinavy died, Raminia left for a voyage of three years. The fourth year Raminia returned from his voyage. The companion, Mohamado, God's chosen one, was installed by the people of Maka. 'I go', said Raminia. But Ramohamado said: 'Don't go, we shall divide the city between us'. Raminia said: 'I do not wish to dispute with the one who is loved by God'. 'Besides', Raminia said, 'my ancestors ruled [the city], my father ruled [the city], and I refuse to be inferior to my companions'. 'And where are you going?', said Mohamado. 'Well', Raminia said, 'I am going to Mahory'. 'Mahory is a place where the illnesses are cruel, where the locusts are cruel, where the people of the forest are cruel, where the serpents are cruel'. And Mohamado remained in place. The names of Ramohamado are Mustapha, the Muslim, and the wives of Ramohamado are Katiza, Isa and Mariam. And Raminia left (translated after Rajaonarimanana, 1990: 175).

This account, which was taken from the annals of one of the kings of the Zafiraminia tribe in the south-east of Madagascar, describes the departure of a group of Muslims from the city of *Maka*, i.e. Mecca. According to this account, they travelled to the Comores and from there they reached the island of Madagascar, where they eventually settled in the south-east at the banks of the river Matitanana. Obviously, the course of history described here is not identical with the one we know. But for the people concerned, a few tribes in the south-east region of Madagascar, of which the most important are the Antaimoro and the Zafiraminia, this is the true story of their descent. They have preserved this account in their most sacred books, written in Arabic script, the so-called *sorabe*, which are under the guardianship of the *katibo* (<*kātib* 'writer') of the clan.

There are many versions of the story: in fact, each tribe has its own story about its own ancestor. They all agree in tracing their descent to Mecca and most of them mention a conflict with the Prophet Muḥammad. In all accounts there are two categories of migrant: believers and infidels, who strike an alliance and leave together for Madagascar. The two categories probably represent an attempt by later generations to explain the contemporary social hierarchy between the castes.

The migrants reach Madagascar via the Comores and when they have come ashore in the northern part of the island, they migrate southwards and finally settle in the Matitanana region, allying themselves with the indigenous population. Two castes or clans are charged with special religious duties, one with the royal power and the other with sacrificial and religious duties, i.e. the right to slaughter cattle and to preserve the sacred *sorabe*. The latter group is that

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of the *katibo*, who until the present day guards its privileges jealously, although the Islamic content of their beliefs may be called scant.

The invasions of the Zafiraminia and the Antaimoro were certainly not isolated phenomena in the history of Madagascar, but they formed part of a series of immigrations by people from the Islamic part of the Indian Ocean. Since the *sorabe* manuscripts give the exact genealogy of the kings of the various tribes, it is possible to calculate the approximate time of their arrival in Madagscar. Rajaonarimanana (1990: 219) dates the invasions of the Islamicized peoples to a period from the beginning of the twelfth century until the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century, when the group of tribes collectively known as the Antaimoro arrived. He argues that some of these migrations took several centuries to run their course.

A similar chronology is set up by Verin (1986), who is primarily concerned with the history of the north of Madagascar, but also mentions the effects of events there on the east and the south-east of the island. According to his account (1986: 85–8) at least two migrations, probably more, of Islamic peoples found their way to the island. All traced their origin to Mecca or Arabia and all had traditions concerning a journey from the northern part of Madagascar to the south-east.

According to Verin (1986: 86) the earliest group may have been the Onjatsy, possibly the first Muslims in the island. The *sorabe* accounts mention that the later group of the Zafiraminia took the Onjatsy as travel companions on their journey to the Matitanana region, where they were the first to settle. Later, the Zafiraminia were overwhelmed by another group of Islamic migrants, the Antaimoro.

2. *The origin of the migrants*

Where did the Muslim migrants come from? According to their own tradition they came directly from the Arabian peninsula, but many modern scholars believe that they came via the African east coast. According to Rajaonarimanana (1990: 180), the ancestors of the Antaimoro came to the African east coast in the twelfth century, their descendants migrated from there via the Comores to Madagascar and arrived in their present region at the end of the fourteenth century. An alternative theory speculates that the invasion of the Zafiraminia and the Antaimoro was connected to Sumatra (cf. Ravoajanahary, 1980: 88).

The theory of a Sumatran origin of the Islamic migrants issue is closely connected with the controversy surrounding the origin of the general population of Madagascar. Since the appearance of Dahl (1951) there is general agreement that the nearest relative of Malagasy is Ma‘anyan, a Malayo-Polynesian language spoken in South East Kalimantan. Originally, Dahl assumed that some of the common ancestors of the present-day Ma‘anyan and the Malagasy migrated to Madagascar in around 400 C.E. Having settled on the island they underwent the influence of Bantu-speaking peoples from the African east coast.

According to others (Adelaar, 1989; 1995a; 1995b) the migrations took place at a much later date, after the migrants from Kalimantan had been on Sumatra for some time. According to this view, the influence of the African continent on the language of Madagascar was much less important then Dahl assumed. Most of the arguments are only marginally relevant to the topic at hand since they centre around the exact relationship between Ma‘anyan and Malagasy, the number of Sanskrit loanwords in both languages, and the exact

route taken by the migrants (for discussion of the arguments of the two main participants in the controversy see Dahl (1991)).

There is, however, one argument that is of more direct relevance to our topic. Adelaar (1995a) claims that on their journey through Sumatra to Madagascar the migrants took with them the Islamic religion as well as some Arabic loanwords, with which they had become acquainted in the kingdom of Śrivijaya. The rulers of this kingdom converted to Islam in the fifteenth century, but Arabs must have been present in the Indonesian islands before that, perhaps even in the thirteenth century (cf. Dahl, 1991: 18; Lombard, 1990). Adelaar concludes that the migration to Madagascar took place at a much later date than Dahl assumes. Among the Arabic loanwords Adelaar mentions are *setra* 'obstacle' (cf. Malay *sihir* 'black magic' <Arabic *siḥr*) and *sombily* 'to slaughter an animal according to Islamic rites' (cf. Malay *sembelih* <Arabic *bismillāh* 'in the name of God'). He also claims (1995a) that the South East Asian origin of these Islamicized groups is confirmed by the form of the Arabic script they use; this form agrees in a number of points with the adaptation of the Arabic script in Malay.

However, as Dahl points out (1991: 18), Arabo-Islamic presence in Madagascar is attested as early as the twelfth century. He denies the value of the argument of the two Arabic loans (1991: 17–9): according to Dahl, *setra* is not Arabic at all, and Malagasy *sombily* is derived from Arabic *sabbil* (just like Malay *sembelih*, which he derives from the verb *sabbala*) which he claims means 'to consecrate an animal for pious use'.[2] Dahl concedes (1991: 120–1) that on their way to Madagascar the ancestors of the Malagasy may have stayed on the island of Bangka but left when this island was annexed by the kingdom of Śrivijaya; in his later publications he sets the date of the migration at approximately 700 C.E. There may have been subsequent contact between Indonesia and Madagascar but this had ceased by the twelfth century, when Arab seafarers took over the trade with East Asia (Dahl, 1991: 118–9).

Whatever their origin, Islam and Islamic knowledge must have come to play an important role in the power struggle between the various groups in the South, each new group boasting superior and more intimate knowledge of the religion and all the concomitant knowledge in the form of medicine, magic, astrology and so on, and each jealously guarding the secrets of Islamic lore and the privileges that were attached to it, such as the right to cut an animal's throat (*sombily*). The interaction between the original, dark-skinned, peoples and the white-skinned Muslims, and the power hierarchy within the Islamic groups, are reflected by the migration stories and the genealogies contained in the *sorabe*.

Although the Antaimoro regard themselves as Muslims, their own stories confirm the fact that they have changed the Islamic tradition to make it more compatible with the customs of the indigenous population. Thus, for instance, there is a story about the adultery of the wife of one of the Antaimoro kings, Andriamboaziribe, with his own son, Rañalivoaziry (<Alī + *al-wazīr* 'the minister') (Rajaonarimanana, 1990: 199–201). In the course of this story the king has to admit that the Muslim laws are too severe and he accepts the mediation of the indigenous population according to the law of the land. Some time after the events told in the *sorabe* accounts, the advent of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century brought Christianity to Madagascar, and this subsequently became the majority religion. Nowadays, the Antaimoro still preserve some

[2] The etymology proposed by Dahl is not very likely. In reality, the verb *sabbala* is a denominative verb from *sabīl allāh* 'God's way', meaning 'to dedicate the usufruct of something to a pious cause' and not connected to slaughter at all (cf. Lane, 1863–93, 1301).

Islamic customs, and some of the leaders of the community have even started to establish an association to revive the ‘true’ Islam, which in their view has become obscured by superstitious practice (cf. Gueunier, 1994: 61–3).

Like the other migrants, the Antaimoro probably shifted at an early stage to the local language, Malagasy, and preserved their traditional lore and history in the *sorabe* manuscripts. These manuscripts, of which there are more than 75, most of them unedited, contain elaborate historical accounts and genealogies, and above all many treatises concerned with geomancy, astrology and magical medicine. They are first mentioned by de Flaucourt in his 1658 dictionary of Malagasy, but were not studied in detail until the writings of Ferrand (1891, 1893, 1902); (for a survey of the history of the study of the *sorabe* see Rajaonarimanana, 1990: 52–118; for a survey of the manuscripts see Munthe, 1982).

The manuscripts are written in Arabic script in three languages or varieties of languages: some of them are in Arabic with a number of Malagasy traits, some of them are in the Antaimoro dialect of Malagasy, and some of them are in a language that contains a strange mixture of Malagasy syntax and morphology with a large number of Arabic words. Sometimes phrases in this mixture are found in the middle of a text in Malagasy, e.g. *arobana alifo sonatso lokobory Imarovany* (i.e. *'arba'īna 'alfa sanatin li-qubūri Imarovany*) ‘[their remains have been] forty thousand years in the cemetery of Imarovany’ (Rajaonarimanana, 1990: 207).

It should be added that even those texts that are purportedly in Arabic and that do not contain any Malagasy elements are sometimes written in a very strange bastard Arabic that is incomprehensible without the Malagasy translation. One example, from a story about the Prophet, edited by Ferrand (1905: 15–6) may illustrate this kind of text (the transliteration follows exactly Ferrand’s edition, including the vowel signs that are always indicated in *sorabe* manuscripts):

> *qāla ḥadiṯu n-nabiyu ma'u sābu wulu'uğūnu qāla ḫarağa n-nabiyu 'ilakur fulāti faqabaru qāla n-nabiyu ṯalaṯati 'ayyāma 'alā yākulu ḏa'āmu wa 'alā yušaribu 'alimā famana 'ananī 'alā sābu fabiḏī 'ilayhi qāla n-nabiyu bi-l-sābi 'aydaka min 'alima'u yašataqīna yasaribu* (the translation of the Malagasy text is given by Ferrand as follows: ‘Le Prophète dit au jeune homme et ... Le Prophète dit et sortit; il se promena dans le désert. Le Prophète dit qu’il resta trois jours sans prendre de nourriture et sans boire d’eau. Le Prophète se dirigea vers le jeune homme (et lui dit): ’Viens ici, toi, vers moi’).

Obviously, this brand of Arabic could only be transmitted in an environment in which there was no direct exposure to the living language and where the written texts constituted the only source of knowledge about it—a source that in the course of the centuries slowly dried up.

3. *The* kalamo

Among the clans of the Antaimoro there is one that has played a special role in the transmission of Arabic, that of the Anakara. Just like the other clans (Anteony, Kazinambo and others), their religious specialists preserved the Islamic tradition in the form of the *sorabe*. But they were the only group to preserve traces of Arabic even in speaking: they posssess a secret speech, the so-called *kalamon'Antesitesy* ‘the language of the people of the sand’, whose lexicon is predominantly Arabic within a Malagasy morphology and syntax. It has remained in use up to the present day. Not surprisingly for a secret

language, the amount of information about it is rather scarce, and it is almost completely neglected in studies of Arabic. One exception is Faublée (1974) who deals with the Arabic loanwords in Malagasy but only mentions the *kalamo* in passing. Recently, two studies have appeared (Rajaonarimanana, 1990; Beaujard, 1998) that give us a better picture of the lexicon of the *kalamo* and of its function in Antaimoro society. Rajaonarimanana (1990: 255–6) even gives a short text in spoken *kalamo*, which he registered during a stay in the region; it is not a naturalistic recording, but was elicited from young informants in the region. It seems to consist of a few isolated sentences:

> *kalamoy n'alikatsany hedaly am-betsy. ikoloa sahero lazatsy laha marivy. Zibiraha avao zihe io fa tsy marivy. Medalia heky mikolo kaoa amy sadomo laha tsy izany medalia hitalaba manamoko* (translation by Rajaonarimanana, 1990: 255–6, 'Dites aux enfants (de) rentrer à la maison. Prends medicaments ami si (vous) êtes malade. A froid seulement (il) mais pas malade. Vas d'abord boire du café et (du) pain sinon venez chercher (des) filles').

Almost all of our information about the structure and the lexicon of the *kalamo* stems from the two sources mentioned above. About 70 per cent of the reported lexicon of the *kalamo* is Arabic in origin, and more than half of this is connected with the domain of astrology or magical medicine, e.g. the names of body parts, plants, animals and astral bodies. Some of the other lexical items that have been recorded derive from other languages (there is, for instance, one loanword from Bantu: *manamoko* 'woman' <*mwanamke*; Rajaonarimanana, 1990: 258), but the majority are based on Malagasy words. These have undergone a change in form, and sometimes a semantic shift.

The formal changes that Malagasy words undergo in *kalamo* almost amount to a process of coding that makes them incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Similar procedures are found in argots and jargons all over the world (see below). In *kalamo* they consist, for instance, in adding meaningless suffixes (Malagasy *fàdy* 'forbidden' >*kalamo fedàly; itsika* 'we [incl.]'> *tsekàfo*), infixes (e.g. *izy* 'he, they' >*ialifonzè*; *ampitso* 'tomorrow' >*ampinontsè*), or prefixes (e.g. *làny* 'exhausted' >*alifàny*). Although there are some examples of Arabic loanwords that have been treated in the same fashion (e.g. *abodo/bedàly* 'slave' <Arabic *'abd; rozy/rezàly* 'rice' <Arabic *ruzz; kadamàfy* <Arabic *qadam* 'foot'), most of the Arabic words seem to have gone through regular phonetic changes. The coding of these few Arabic words may perhaps be explained by the fact that these were generally known in Malagasy and had therefore to be 'dissimulated' in the secret language just like the real Malagasy words.

Many of the Arabic loanwords are freely combined with Malagasy words, and even with grammatical morphemes. A number of words derived from Arabic verbs can be combined with the Malagasy prefix *mi-*, e.g. *mi-dokòlo* 'to enter' (<*dakhala*), *mi-hafizo* 'to protect, guard' (<*ḥafiẓa*), *mi-talàba* 'to find a woman' (<*ṭalaba* 'to look for'), *mi-kòlo* 'to eat' (<*'akala*). In these cases the word without the prefix is also used as a verb, in other cases there seems to be a semantic distinction, e.g. *hàtsa* 'to arrive'/*mi-hàtsa* 'to visit' (<*'atā*), or a word class shift, e.g. *kalàmo* 'word, speech'/*mi-kalàmo* 'to speak' (<*kalām*). The source of the *kalamo* verbs may have been the verbal stem, or perhaps in some cases the imperative, as seems to be indicated by the vowels of for instance *dokòlo* (<*dakhala*, imperative *udkhul*?). Some words seem to be derived from the Arabic imperfect, e.g. *zosaribo* 'drunk' from *yashrabu*.

In the case of the nominal forms the treatment of the Arabic article seems

to point to different stages in the borrowing of Arabic material. There is one category of common words that never have the Arabic article, e.g. *èeny* 'eye' (<*'ayn*), *faràsy* 'horse' (<*faras*) or *zòma* 'day' (<*yawm*). In another category of words, the reanalysis of the Arabic article is obvious, e.g. *ladiky* 'chicken, rooster' (<*al-dīk*), *lanofy* 'nose' (<*al-'anf*), *lañobàry* 'geomancy' (<*al-ghubār* 'dust'), *laràby* 'stranger, white man' (<*al-'arabī*). In a third category, the article seems to function as a separate morpheme, which may be deleted in certain syntactic contexts, e.g. *alibètsy* 'house' (<*al-bayt*), which becomes *ambètsy* 'in the house' with the Malagasy preposition *am-*; similarly *alibihàry* 'ocean' (<*al-biḥār* 'seas [pl.]'), *alibakàra* 'cow' (<*al-baqara*). These cases may reflect an originally productive use of the article, unless they are to be interpreted as the result of later learned reinterpretation. As a matter of fact, in learned words connected with astrology, such as *alikilìly* 'third day of the astrological sign *Alimizàn*' (<*al-'iklīl*), the use of the article would seem to point to a written borrowing, as is the case with many modern Arabic loanwords in Romance languages, Hausa, Malay and other languages.

Some *kalamo* words appear to be derived from Arabic plurals, e.g. *alibihàry* 'ocean' (<*al-biḥār*) as already mentioned; other examples are *arizàhy* 'wind' (<*ar-riyāḥ*), *tozòro*, *tozòry* 'bird' (<*ṭuyūr*), *malàika* 'angel' (<*malā'ika*).

The lexicon also contains examples of nominal compounds in which Malagasy and Arabic elements are combined. In some instances grammatical morphemes are combined with Arabic words, as in the case of the preposition *am-*, *an-*, mentioned above (cf. also *andobòry* 'here' <Malagasy *an-* +Arabic *dubur* 'back [pl.]' and *anzôma* 'today' <*an-* +Arabic *yawm*) or the prefix of the passive participle *voa-* (e.g. *voahàky* 'satisfied' <*voa-* +Arabic *ḥaqq* 'right'). In other compounds two lexical items are combined, e.g. *solokàda* 'shoe' (<Malagasy *solo* 'replacement' +Arabic *qadam* 'foot'). In a few cases, Arabic words are combined in apparently newly formed compounds of Arabic, e.g. *zamolàdy* 'sea cow' (<*jāmūs* 'buffalo' +*al-wādī* 'river-bed'?), *daradàmo* 'sun' (<*dār* 'house' +*al-dam* 'blood'?). The compound *alimao maheny* 'litt. water of the eyes, tears' (Rajaonarimanana, 1990: 1270, where it is cited as *mahery*) is clearly an innovation.

4. *The origin of the* kalamo

A first clue to the way in which the *kalamo* originated is the fact that it uses Malagasy morphology with Arabic lexical items. This suggests that we are dealing here with loanwords that were borrowed by speakers of a language other than Arabic, rather than with an Arabic pidgin serving as a means of communication between invading Arabs and an indigenous population. In the latter case one would expect at least some traces of Arabic morphology. As a matter of fact, almost no grammaticalization of Arabic words seems to have taken place in *kalamo*. The few cases that I have been able to find in the literature may have been borrowed from one of its predecessors: the use of two pronominal forms, *alaikòmo* 'you [pl.]' <*'alaykum* and *antà* 'you [sg.]' <*'anta*, the use of the negation *ma* in the sense of 'there is/are not', the use of *kòfo* 'there is/there are' (<*kāfī* 'enough'?), and the use of two prepositions, *by* and *fy* 'in' in a few fossilized expressions (as in *fizalàly* 'night' <*fī layla*). The absence of Arabic morphology makes it doubtful that *kalamo* goes back to a pidginized variety of Arabic developed by non-arabophones. In such cases of language shift, the structure of the pidgin is usually based on that of the target language, and when there are morphological elements, these rarely stem from the original language of the new speakers (cf. Thomason and Kaufman,

1988). Likewise, if *kalamo* had originated as a pidginized variety of Malagasy developed by an arabophone group in their contacts with the indigenous population, we would expect Malagasy morphology with a Malagasy lexicon, which is not the case either (see also Versteegh, forthcoming).

As mentioned above, in the case of the learnt borrowings with the Arabic article, some features of the Arabic loanwords point to a written transmission. In the first place, there are some examples of words that may be the result of faulty reading (Beaujard (1998: 14) cites among other examples *tohòry* instead of *zohòry* ' palm of the hand ', by misreading *ẓahr* as **ṭahr*). More importantly, some of the words contain the Arabic feminine ending *-at* in the form of *atsy*, e.g. *sanàntso* ' year ' <*sanat*-; *mangafiràty* ' unhappy accident ' <*maghfirat*- ' excuse '; *sefàntsy* ' lip, tooth ' <*shafat*-; *maràtsy* ' woman ' <*mar'at*-). This preservation of the (written) ending is reminiscent of the situation in both Swahili and Malay; it also occurs in many of the Arabic loanwords in Persian (for a discussion of the *-at* ending in Persian see Perry (1991)).

But a written origin is insufficient to explain the entire structure of the language. In fact, the form of some of the Arabic loanwords may tell us something about the origin of the Antaimoro people. One of the most surprising facts about the phonetic form of the loanwords is the treatment of Arabic *ḍād*/*ẓā*. In most Arabic dialects these two phonemes have merged resulting in /ḍ/ in sedentary and /ẓ/ in Bedouin dialects. There are very few traces of a differential treatment of the two phonemes. In the South Arabian dialect of Dathīna the alleged reflex of /ḍ/ is /ḷ/ (as opposed to /*ẓā'*/ which remains /*ḏ*/; cf. Landberg, 1901; 1905–1913). Allegedly, differentiation also takes place in the reading tradition of the *Quran* in Mauritania (cf. Cohen, 1963: 11, n1). Here and in the dialects of the Hawran (cf. Cantineau, 1940: 101) the *ḍād* seems to be realized as a lateralized consonant. A differential treatment also seems to be evidenced by the Arabic loanwords in some other languages, notably in those that appear to have preserved traces of the origin lateralized pronunciation, as in the case of some Arabic loanwords in the Romance languages, in a few African languages (Hausa, Yoruba), and in Indonesian languages, such as Malay and Acehnese (see Versteegh, 1999: 276–7).

In *kalamo* we find very clear traces of a different treatment of the two phonemes in which /ḍ/ becomes /v/ and /ẓā'/ becomes /z/. (see tables 1 and 2). The differential treatment of the two phonemes could be a clue to the origin of the Antaimoro, and therefore of the *kalamo*. We have seen above that, apart from the theory of a Sumatran origin, two different routes for the migrants are mentioned in the literature: either they came directly from Arabia, or from the African east coast.

The form of some of the Arabic loanwords in Malagasy would seem to favour the latter hypothesis, since it points strongly to a Swahili intermediary. In Swahili words must always end in a vowel, and consequently Arabic loanwords that ended in a consonant received a final vowel. Usually this vowel is *i*, but after a labial consonant it is *u*, e.g. *risasi* ' lead ', *thamani* ' price ', but *kalamu* ' pencil ', *kitabu* ' book ', *dhaifu* ' guest '. In a few cases *a* is used, e.g. *faraja* ' comfort ' (<*faraj*), and in a few other cases the final vowel rhymes with the preceding one, e.g. *shubaka* ' recess ', *tarehe* ' date ', *soko* ' market '.

Since Malagasy words must end in a vowel, too, the fact that the Arabic loanwords in Malagasy usually end in *-y* or *-o* does not in itself prove anything about the Swahili provenance of these loanwords. Some of the Malagasy loanwords, however, seem to conform to a similar rule to Swahili with regard to labial consonants since the majority of words ending in *-m* or *-b* have *-o* (e.g. *dàmo* ' blood ', *bàbo* ' door ', *karìmo* ' generous ', *kalàmo* ' pencil ' and

Table 1. *Reflexes of Arabic /ḍād/ in* kalamo *(data from Beaujard (1998))*

alibiàvy	white	*al-'abyaḍ*
alifovàtsy	silver	*al-fiḍḍa*
ambahàky	to laugh	*ḍaḥika*
angavoàba	angry	*ghaḍiba*
bèva	egg	*bayḍa*
bezàvo	white	*bayāḍ*
favôly	honour, virtue	*faḍl*
kovòra	green, blue	*'akhḍar*
laròvy	earth	*al-'arḍ*
marìvy	ill	*marīḍ*
mavèo	here	*maḍā* 'to pass, to be past?'
novàdy	arm	*'aḍud*
ramavà	Ramadan	*ramaḍān*
farovo (Ferrand, 1905: 29)	duty	*farḍ*
RaRivoany (Ferrand, 1905: 25)	[name]	*Riḍwān*

Table 2. *Reflexes of Arabic /ẓā'/ in* kalamo *(data from Beaujard (1998))*

azohòra	afternoon	*al-ẓuhr*
hafìzo	to take care	*ḥafiẓa*
tohòry (cf. above, p. 183)	palm of the hand	*ẓahr*
zafarìho	nail	*ẓufr*
zahàra	clear	*ẓāhir*

'speech', *kalìbo* 'heart', *haràmo* 'forbidden', etc.) with only a few exceptions (e.g. *zahàby* 'gold', *lohatàby* 'wood').

The comparison between Swahili and Malay loanwords and those in *kalamo* may be used as a further argument against the Sumatran origin. In one case the Malagasy word has the Swahili, not the Malay, final vowel (*asamòsy* 'sun', Swahili -*shamsi*, -*shemsi*, Malay *syamsu*). With verbs it is more difficult to find a pattern in view of the small number of verbal loans in Malagasy. However, the fact that verbs are borrowed at all constitutes an important difference from the Malay loanwords, which are almost without exception borrowed from Arabic nouns. The one exception of an Arabic loanword in Malay functioning as a radical verb (*pikiri* 'to think') is probably derived from an Arabic noun, too (*fikra* 'thought').

The study of Arabic loanwords in Malagasy has not yet progressed to the point at which we might say something about the semantic comparison between Swahili, Malay and Malagasy. There is one example of a loanword whose meaning corresponds much more closely to that in Swahili: *sèko* 'old' (<*šaykh* 'old man') is closer to Swahili *sheik* 'elder, important person' than to Malay *syekh* 'spiritual leader, sheikh', which looks like a later borrowing. There are doubtless more examples, but for a detailed comparison we need a finer-grained analysis of the Arabic loanwords in the *kalamo*, and above all more data from fieldwork.

Against an exclusively Swahili background, however, speaks the fact that the two phonemes /*ḍād*/ and /ẓā'/ are not found separately in the Arabic loanwords in Swahili (which has *dh* or *z* for both phonemes (cf. Tucker, 1946:

863, n1–2). The latter form may be the result of Persian influence. Besides, there are many common words that are quite different from the Swahili form (as well as from the Malay form, for that matter). Therefore, an origin from the Arabian peninsula cannot be excluded entirely, and this would be in line with the tradition of the Antaimoro (and the Zafiraminia) themselves.

5. *Conclusion: The origin of Arabic in Madagascar*

In the end, the question of whether the Islamic migrants came directly from the Arabian peninsula, or via the East African coast, cannot be answered by the form of the loanwords alone, but must take into account the nature of the language and the way in which it emerged. According to Verin (1986: 53) ' the Islamic peoples who settled on the island and trade that resulted from their coming came above all from the neighbouring African coast'. In this view there was no direct link with the Arabian peninsula or the Persian Gulf, but the Islamic migrations to Madagascar were part of the same movement that brought successive waves of Bantu migrants from the Swahili civilization on the East African coast to Madagascar. The Swahili civilization was the outcome of the continuous Islamic presence from Persia and the Arabian peninsula in this region.

Persian influence (cf. Verin, 1986: 53–4; and for the linguistic influence Knappert, 1983) had indeed been present on the African east coast, at least since the eighth century (the Shiraz connection), but from the eleventh century onwards, with the development of Aden, Hadramaut became important as well. This culminated in the Yemenite invasion by the Mahdali dynasty and their conquest of the coastal town of Kilwa. Later, in the seventeenth century, Oman prevailed in this area and turned Zanzibar into an Omani sultanate.

If we acknowledge the link between the *kalamon'Antesitesy* and the East African Muslim-Swahili civilization, what does this tell us about its development? Does *kalamo* in its present form preserve traces of an early Arabic pidgin that was spoken on the coasts of the Indian Ocean and Madagascar? We have seen that the combination of Malagasy morphology with Arabic lexicon makes it unlikely that *kalamo* goes back directly to a pidginized variety of Arabic. However, some pre-existing pidgin may have played a role in the history of the *kalamo*.

According to the scenario of the migration of the Antaimoro sketched by Rajaonarimanana (1990: 167–231) arabophones came to the north of the island where they found earlier migrants who had settled there and developed an Arabic pidgin for their dealing with the indigenous population, both commercial and religious. When the Antaimoro migrated southwards and settled in the region of the Matitanana river, they accommodated linguistically to the tribes they found there, as indicated by their own stories about the daughters of indigenous kings they married.

The pidgin the Antaimoro had been using until then in their dealings with the indigenous population acquired a different function and became a secret language that was transmitted to later generations as a special sign of their identity. In particular, word formation in the *kalamo* is typical of forms of secret language that we know from elsewhere. Coding of normal words is a typical feature of argots and jargons (cf. e.g. in English/American slang: Flexner, 1960). It also occurs in in-group languages of Romani, for instance in the English-based Shelta, the language of some itinerant groups in the British Isles and in Ireland (cf. Hancock, 1974), in which similar word formation principles seem to be used as in *kalamo* (backslang, arbitrary pre- and

suffixes, deaspiration, denasalization, etc.). Some of the Romani mixed dialects that are analysed by Boretzky and Igla (1994) seem to function as an in-group code in a way that resembles our *kalamo*, and it may be worthwhile to compare their structure with that of the *kalamo*. All over the Arabic world similar coding devices are found in secret languages of students and others (cf. Youssi, 1998), for instance in a secret language in Mecca (*Misfalāwiyya*), which consists in the insertion of /Vowel + rb/, e.g. *nār* > *nārbār* (Muhammad Bakalla, personal communication).

Secret languages elsewhere in the Islamic world, such as the *Waris* language of quranic students in Borno (Nigeria) analysed by Owens and Hassan (2000) seem to have a different origin, since they are based almost entirely on vocabulary and phrases learnt in school. The secret language of the goldsmiths in Cairo (*lughat al-Yāhūd*), which consists entirely of Hebrew words within an Arabic styntactic structure, is of a different nature, too, since its scope is restricted to the trade of the goldsmiths, who use it to dissimulate their conversations from their customers (Gabriel Rosenbaum, personal communication).

If *kalamo* did originate in the fashion described here, it must have functioned as a secret language for the initiated only, just like any other secret language. Consequently, since children were not likely to learn the *kalamo* until they were somewhat older, there was no tendency on the part of later generations to creolize the language, and it remained an artificial register fed from different sources; on the one hand the original stock of the Arabic pidgin that had once existed, on the other, the codings of Malagasy words, and finally, from the learnt tradition of the *sorabe* that continued to be a source for learnt borrowings.

Secret coding can, indeed, not have been the only source for the *kalamo* lexicon. The fact that the form of the loanwords in *kalamo* differs from that of the Arabic stock in Swahili, especially with regard to the treatment of Arabic /*ḍād*/ and /ẓā'/, shows that even if the immigrants themselves probably came from the African east coast, their ancestors must have come from Southern Arabia or Oman, although not as contemporaries of Muḥammad as their own history claims. They must have preserved Arabic as their native language for some time, and because of the special form of the loanwords in *kalamo*, which does not always correspond with that in Swahili, we must also assume that some of the varieties of Arabic spoken on the east coast still reflected varieties in South Arabia that have since disappeared.

This scenario would explain the hybrid nature of the *kalamo* with, on the one hand, typicially pidginized features, such as the few cases of grammaticalization, and on the other, clear signs of learnt influence, such as the ending -*at*. It also agrees with the Swahili traces that we pointed out above and which could be explained as remnants of an earlier stage. Efforts to connect all Arabic loanwords to a Swahili intermediary are unpromising precisely because of the difference between the various layers, but historical research on the Arab presence in Africa is bound to bring up more details about the origin of Arabic loanwords in Madagascar.

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